CHAPTER XXII. THE REMITTANCE MAN.

Singleton Carthew, the father of Norris, was heavily built and feebly vitalised, sensitive as a musician, dull as a sheep, and conscientious as a dog. He took his position with seriousness, even with pomp; the long rooms, the silent servants, seemed in his eyes like the observances of some religion of which he was the mortal god. He had the stupid man's intolerance of stupidity in others; the vain man's exquisite alarm lest it should be detected in himself. And on both sides Norris irritated and offended him. He thought his son a fool, and he suspected that his son returned the compliment with interest. The history of their relation was simple; they met seldom, they quarrelled often. To his mother, a fiery, pungent, practical woman, already disappointed in her husband and her elder son, Norris was only a fresh disappointment.

Yet the lad's faults were no great matter; he was diffident, placable, passive, unambitious, unenterprising; life did not much attract him; he watched it like a curious and dull exhibition, not much amused, and not tempted in the least to take a part. He beheld his father ponderously grinding sand, his mother fierily breaking butterflies, his brother labouring at the pleasures of the Hawbuck with the ardour of a soldier in a doubtful battle; and the vital sceptic looked on wondering. They were careful and troubled about many things; for him there seemed not even one thing needful. He was born disenchanted, the world's promises awoke no echo in his bosom, the world's activities and the world's

distinctions seemed to him equally without a base in fact. He liked the open air; he liked comradeship, it mattered not with whom, his comrades were only a remedy for solitude. And he had a taste for painted art. An array of fine pictures looked upon his childhood, and from these roods of jewelled canvas he received an indelible impression. The gallery at Stallbridge betokened generations of picture lovers; Norris was perhaps the first of his race to hold the pencil. The taste was genuine, it grew and strengthened with his growth; and yet he suffered it to be suppressed with scarce a struggle. Time came for him to go to Oxford, and he resisted faintly. He was stupid, he said; it was no good to put him through the mill; he wished to be a painter. The words fell on his father like a thunderbolt, and Norris made haste to give way. "It didn't really matter, don't you know?" said he. "And it seemed an awful shame to vex the old boy."

To Oxford he went obediently, hopelessly; and at Oxford became the hero of a certain circle. He was active and adroit; when he was in the humour, he excelled in many sports; and his singular melancholy detachment gave him a place apart. He set a fashion in his clique. Envious undergraduates sought to parody his unaffected lack of zeal and fear; it was a kind of new Byronism more composed and dignified. "Nothing really mattered"; among other things, this formula embraced the dons; and though he always meant to be civil, the effect on the college authorities was one of startling rudeness. His indifference cut like insolence; and in some outbreak of his constitutional levity (the complement of his melancholy) he was "sent down" in the middle of the

second year.

The event was new in the annals of the Carthews, and Singleton was prepared to make the most of it. It had been long his practice to prophesy for his second son a career of ruin and disgrace. There is an advantage in this artless parental habit. Doubtless the father is interested in his son; but doubtless also the prophet grows to be interested in his prophecies. If the one goes wrong, the others come true. Old Carthew drew from this source esoteric consolations; he dwelt at length on his own foresight; he produced variations hitherto unheard from the old theme "I told you so," coupled his son's name with the gallows and the hulks, and spoke of his small handful of college debts as though he must raise money on a mortgage to discharge them.

"I don't think that is fair, sir," said Norris. "I lived at college exactly as you told me. I am sorry I was sent down, and you have a perfect right to blame me for that; but you have no right to pitch into me about these debts."

The effect upon a stupid man not unjustly incensed need scarcely be described. For a while Singleton raved.

"I'll tell you what, father," said Norris at last, "I don't think this is going to do. I think you had better let me take to painting. It's the only thing I take a spark of interest in. I shall never be steady as long as I'm at anything else."

"When you stand here, sir, to the neck in disgrace," said the father, "I should have hoped you would have had more good taste than to repeat this levity."

The hint was taken; the levity was never more obtruded on the father's notice, and Norris was inexorably launched upon a backward voyage. He went abroad to study foreign languages, which he learned, at a very expensive rate; and a fresh crop of debts fell soon to be paid, with similar lamentations, which were in this case perfectly justified, and to which Norris paid no regard. He had been unfairly treated over the Oxford affair; and with a spice of malice very surprising in one so placable, and an obstinacy remarkable in one so weak, refused from that day forward to exercise the least captaincy on his expenses. He wasted what he would; he allowed his servants to despoil him at their pleasure; he sowed insolvency; and when the crop was ripe, notified his father with exasperating calm. His own capital was put in his hands, he was planted in the diplomatic service and told he must depend upon himself.

He did so till he was twenty-five; by which time he had spent his money, laid in a handsome choice of debts, and acquired (like so many other melancholic and uninterested persons) a habit of gambling. An Austrian colonel--the same who afterwards hanged himself at Monte Carlo--gave him a lesson which lasted two-and-twenty hours, and left him wrecked and helpless. Old Singleton once more repurchased the honour of his name, this time at a fancy figure; and Norris was set afloat again on stern

conditions. An allowance of three hundred pounds in the year was to be paid to him quarterly by a lawyer in Sydney, New South Wales. He was not to write. Should he fail on any quarter-day to be in Sydney, he was to be held for dead, and the allowance tacitly withdrawn. Should he return to Europe, an advertisement publicly disowning him was to appear in every paper of repute.

It was one of his most annoying features as a son, that he was always polite, always just, and in whatever whirlwind of domestic anger, always calm. He expected trouble; when trouble came, he was unmoved: he might have said with Singleton, "I told you so"; he was content with thinking, "just as I expected." On the fall of these last thunderbolts, he bore himself like a person only distantly interested in the event; pocketed the money and the reproaches, obeyed orders punctually; took ship and came to Sydney. Some men are still lads at twenty-five; and so it was with Norris. Eighteen days after he landed, his quarter's allowance was all gone, and with the light-hearted hopefulness of strangers in what is called a new country, he began to besiege offices and apply for all manner of incongruous situations. Everywhere, and last of all from his lodgings, he was bowed out; and found himself reduced, in a very elegant suit of summer tweeds, to herd and camp with the degraded outcasts of the city.

In this strait, he had recourse to the lawyer who paid him his allowance.

"Try to remember that my time is valuable, Mr. Carthew," said the lawyer. "It is quite unnecessary you should enlarge on the peculiar position in which you stand. Remittance men, as we call them here, are not so rare in my experience; and in such cases I act upon a system. I make you a present of a sovereign; here it is. Every day you choose to call, my clerk will advance you a shilling; on Saturday, since my office is closed on Sunday, he will advance you half a crown. My conditions are these: that you do not come to me, but to my clerk; that you do not come here the worse of liquor; and you go away the moment you are paid and have signed a receipt. I wish you a good-morning."

"I have to thank you, I suppose," said Carthew. "My position is so wretched that I cannot even refuse this starvation allowance."

"Starvation!" said the lawyer, smiling. "No man will starve here on a shilling a day. I had on my hands another young gentleman, who remained continuously intoxicated for six years on the same allowance." And he once more busied himself with his papers.

In the time that followed, the image of the smiling lawyer haunted Carthew's memory. "That three minutes' talk was all the education I ever had worth talking of," says he. "It was all life in a nut-shell. Confound it! I thought, have I got to the point of envying that ancient fossil?"

Every morning for the next two or three weeks, the stroke of ten found

Norris, unkempt and haggard, at the lawyer's door. The long day and longer night he spent in the Domain, now on a bench, now on the grass under a Norfolk Island pine, the companion of perhaps the lowest class on earth, the Larrikins of Sydney. Morning after morning, the dawn behind the lighthouse recalled him from slumber; and he would stand and gaze upon the changing east, the fading lenses, the smokeless city, and the many-armed and many-masted harbour growing slowly clear under his eyes. His bed-fellows (so to call them) were less active; they lay sprawled upon the grass and benches, the dingy men, the frowsy women, prolonging their late repose; and Carthew wandered among the sleeping bodies alone, and cursed the incurable stupidity of his behaviour. Day brought a new society of nursery-maids and children, and fresh-dressed and (I am sorry to say) tight-laced maidens, and gay people in rich traps; upon the skirts of which Carthew and "the other blackguards"--his own bitter phrase--skulked, and chewed grass, and looked on. Day passed, the light died, the green and leafy precinct sparkled with lamps or lay in shadow, and the round of the night began again, the loitering women, the lurking men, the sudden outburst of screams, the sound of flying feet. "You mayn't believe it," says Carthew, "but I got to that pitch that I didn't care a hang. I have been wakened out of my sleep to hear a woman screaming, and I have only turned upon my other side. Yes, it's a queer place, where the dowagers and the kids walk all day, and at night you can hear people bawling for help as if it was the Forest of Bondy, with the lights of a great town all round, and parties spinning through in cabs from Government House and dinner with my lord!"

It was Norris's diversion, having none other, to scrape acquaintance, where, how, and with whom he could. Many a long dull talk he held upon the benches or the grass; many a strange waif he came to know; many strange things he heard, and saw some that were abominable. It was to one of these last that he owed his deliverance from the Domain. For some time the rain had been merciless; one night after another he had been obliged to squander fourpence on a bed and reduce his board to the remaining eightpence: and he sat one morning near the Macquarrie Street entrance, hungry, for he had gone without breakfast, and wet, as he had already been for several days, when the cries of an animal in distress attracted his attention. Some fifty yards away, in the extreme angle of the grass, a party of the chronically unemployed had got hold of a dog, whom they were torturing in a manner not to be described. The heart of Norris, which had grown indifferent to the cries of human anger or distress, woke at the appeal of the dumb creature. He ran amongst the Larrikins, scattered them, rescued the dog, and stood at bay. They were six in number, shambling gallowsbirds; but for once the proverb was right, cruelty was coupled with cowardice, and the wretches cursed him and made off. It chanced that this act of prowess had not passed unwitnessed. On a bench near by there was seated a shopkeeper's assistant out of employ, a diminutive, cheerful, red-headed creature by the name of Hemstead. He was the last man to have interfered himself, for his discretion more than equalled his valour; but he made haste to congratulate Carthew, and to warn him he might not always be so fortunate.

"They're a dyngerous lot of people about this park. My word! it doesn't do to ply with them!" he observed, in that RYCY AUSTRYLIAN English, which (as it has received the imprimatur of Mr. Froude) we should all make haste to imitate.

"Why, I'm one of that lot myself," returned Carthew.

Hemstead laughed and remarked that he knew a gentleman when he saw one.

"For all that, I am simply one of the unemployed," said Carthew, seating himself beside his new acquaintance, as he had sat (since this experience began) beside so many dozen others.

"I'm out of a plyce myself," said Hemstead.

"You beat me all the way and back," says Carthew. "My trouble is that I have never been in one."

"I suppose you've no tryde?" asked Hemstead.

"I know how to spend money," replied Carthew, "and I really do know something of horses and something of the sea. But the unions head me off; if it weren't for them, I might have had a dozen berths."

"My word!" cried the sympathetic listener. "Ever try the mounted

police?" he inquired.

"I did, and was bowled out," was the reply; "couldn't pass the doctors."

"Well, what do you think of the ryleways, then?" asked Hemstead.

"What do YOU think of them, if you come to that?" asked Carthew.

"O, _I_ don't think of them; I don't go in for manual labour," said the little man proudly. "But if a man don't mind that, he's pretty sure of a job there."

"By George, you tell me where to go!" cried Carthew, rising.

The heavy rains continued, the country was already overrun with floods; the railway system daily required more hands, daily the superintendent advertised; but "the unemployed" preferred the resources of charity and rapine, and a navvy, even an amateur navvy, commanded money in the market. The same night, after a tedious journey, and a change of trains to pass a landslip, Norris found himself in a muddy cutting behind South Clifton, attacking his first shift of manual labour.

For weeks the rain scarce relented. The whole front of the mountain slipped seaward from above, avalanches of clay, rock, and uprooted forest spewed over the cliffs and fell upon the beach or in the breakers. Houses were carried bodily away and smashed like nuts; others

were menaced and deserted, the door locked, the chimney cold, the dwellers fled elsewhere for safety. Night and day the fire blazed in the encampment; night and day hot coffee was served to the overdriven toilers in the shift; night and day the engineer of the section made his rounds with words of encouragement, hearty and rough and well suited to his men. Night and day, too, the telegraph clicked with disastrous news and anxious inquiry. Along the terraced line of rail, rare trains came creeping and signalling; and paused at the threatened corner, like living things conscious of peril. The commandant of the post would hastily review his labours, make (with a dry throat) the signal to advance; and the whole squad line the way and look on in a choking silence, or burst into a brief cheer as the train cleared the point of danger and shot on, perhaps through the thin sunshine between squalls, perhaps with blinking lamps into the gathering, rainy twilight.

One such scene Carthew will remember till he dies. It blew great guns from the seaward; a huge surf bombarded, five hundred feet below him, the steep mountain's foot; close in was a vessel in distress, firing shots from a fowling-piece, if any help might come. So he saw and heard her the moment before the train appeared and paused, throwing up a Babylonian tower of smoke into the rain, and oppressing men's hearts with the scream of her whistle. The engineer was there himself; he paled as he made the signal: the engine came at a foot's pace; but the whole bulk of mountain shook and seemed to nod seaward, and the watching navvies instinctively clutched at shrubs and trees: vain precautions, vain as the shots from the poor sailors. Once again fear was

disappointed; the train passed unscathed; and Norris, drawing a long breath, remembered the labouring ship and glanced below. She was gone.

So the days and the nights passed: Homeric labour in Homeric circumstance. Carthew was sick with sleeplessness and coffee; his hands, softened by the wet, were cut to ribbons; yet he enjoyed a peace of mind and health of body hitherto unknown. Plenty of open air, plenty of physical exertion, a continual instancy of toil; here was what had been hitherto lacking in that misdirected life, and the true cure of vital scepticism. To get the train through: there was the recurrent problem; no time remained to ask if it were necessary. Carthew, the idler, the spendthrift, the drifting dilettant, was soon remarked, praised, and advanced. The engineer swore by him and pointed him out for an example. "I've a new chum, up here," Norris overheard him saying, "a young swell. He's worth any two in the squad." The words fell on the ears of the discarded son like music; and from that moment, he not only found an interest, he took a pride, in his plebeian tasks.

The press of work was still at its highest when quarter-day approached. Norris was now raised to a position of some trust; at his discretion, trains were stopped or forwarded at the dangerous cornice near North Clifton; and he found in this responsibility both terror and delight. The thought of the seventy-five pounds that would soon await him at the lawyer's, and of his own obligation to be present every quarter-day in Sydney, filled him for a little with divided councils. Then he made up his mind, walked in a slack moment to the inn at Clifton, ordered a

sheet of paper and a bottle of beer, and wrote, explaining that he held a good appointment which he would lose if he came to Sydney, and asking the lawyer to accept this letter as an evidence of his presence in the colony, and retain the money till next quarter-day. The answer came in course of post, and was not merely favourable but cordial. "Although what you propose is contrary to the terms of my instructions," it ran, "I willingly accept the responsibility of granting your request. I should say I am agreeably disappointed in your behaviour. My experience has not led me to found much expectations on gentlemen in your position."

The rains abated, and the temporary labour was discharged; not Norris, to whom the engineer clung as to found money; not Norris, who found himself a ganger on the line in the regular staff of navvies. His camp was pitched in a grey wilderness of rock and forest, far from any house; as he sat with his mates about the evening fire, the trains passing on the track were their next and indeed their only neighbours, except the wild things of the wood. Lovely weather, light and monotonous employment, long hours of somnolent camp-fire talk, long sleepless nights, when he reviewed his foolish and fruitless career as he rose and walked in the moonlit forest, an occasional paper of which he would read all, the advertisements with as much relish as the text: such was the tenor of an existence which soon began to weary and harass him. He lacked and regretted the fatigue, the furious hurry, the suspense, the fires, the midnight coffee, the rude and mud-bespattered poetry of the first toilful weeks. In the quietness of his new surroundings, a voice

summoned him from this exorbital part of life, and about the middle of October he threw up his situation and bade farewell to the camp of tents and the shoulder of Bald Mountain.

Clad in his rough clothes, with a bundle on his shoulder and his accumulated wages in his pocket, he entered Sydney for the second time, and walked with pleasure and some bewilderment in the cheerful streets, like a man landed from a voyage. The sight of the people led him on. He forgot his necessary errands, he forgot to eat. He wandered in moving multitudes like a stick upon a river. Last he came to the Domain and strolled there, and remembered his shame and sufferings, and looked with poignant curiosity at his successors. Hemstead, not much shabbier and no less cheerful than before, he recognised and addressed like an old family friend.

"That was a good turn you did me," said he. "That railway was the making of me. I hope you've had luck yourself."

"My word, no!" replied the little man. "I just sit here and read the _Dead Bird_. It's the depression in tryde, you see. There's no positions goin' that a man like me would care to look at." And he showed Norris his certificates and written characters, one from a grocer in Wooloomooloo, one from an ironmonger, and a third from a billiard saloon. "Yes," he said, "I tried bein' a billiard marker. It's no account; these lyte hours are no use for a man's health. I won't be no

man's slyve," he added firmly.

On the principle that he who is too proud to be a slave is usually not too modest to become a pensioner, Carthew gave him half a sovereign, and departed, being suddenly struck with hunger, in the direction of the Paris House. When he came to that quarter of the city, the barristers were trotting in the streets in wig and gown, and he stood to observe them with his bundle on his shoulder, and his mind full of curious recollections of the past.

"By George!" cried a voice, "it's Mr. Carthew!"

And turning about he found himself face to face with a handsome sunburnt youth, somewhat fatted, arrayed in the finest of fine raiment, and sporting about a sovereign's worth of flowers in his buttonhole. Norris had met him during his first days in Sydney at a farewell supper; had even escorted him on board a schooner full of cockroaches and black-boy sailors, in which he was bound for six months among the islands; and had kept him ever since in entertained remembrance. Tom Hadden (known to the bulk of Sydney folk as Tommy) was heir to a considerable property, which a prophetic father had placed in the hands of rigorous trustees. The income supported Mr. Hadden in splendour for about three months out of twelve; the rest of the year he passed in retreat among the islands.
He was now about a week returned from his eclipse, pervading Sydney in hansom cabs and airing the first bloom of six new suits of clothes; and

yet the unaffected creature hailed Carthew in his working jeans and with the damning bundle on his shoulder, as he might have claimed acquaintance with a duke.

"Come and have a drink!" was his cheerful cry.

"I'm just going to have lunch at the Paris House," returned Carthew. "It's a long time since I have had a decent meal."

"Splendid scheme!" said Hadden. "I've only had breakfast half an hour ago; but we'll have a private room, and I'll manage to pick something. It'll brace me up. I was on an awful tear last night, and I've met no end of fellows this morning." To meet a fellow, and to stand and share a drink, were with Tom synonymous terms.

They were soon at table in the corner room up-stairs, and paying due attention to the best fare in Sydney. The odd similarity of their positions drew them together, and they began soon to exchange confidences. Carthew related his privations in the Domain and his toils as a navvy; Hadden gave his experience as an amateur copra merchant in the South Seas, and drew a humorous picture of life in a coral island. Of the two plans of retirement, Carthew gathered that his own had been vastly the more lucrative; but Hadden's trading outfit had consisted largely of bottled stout and brown sherry for his own consumption.

"I had champagne too," said Hadden, "but I kept that in case of

sickness, until I didn't seem to be going to be sick, and then I opened a pint every Sunday. Used to sleep all morning, then breakfast with my pint of fizz, and lie in a hammock and read Hallam's _Middle Ages_. Have you read that? I always take something solid to the islands. There's no doubt I did the thing in rather a fine style; but if it was gone about a little cheaper, or there were two of us to bear the expense, it ought to pay hand over fist. I've got the influence, you see. I'm a chief now, and sit in the speak-house under my own strip of roof. I'd like to see them taboo ME! They daren't try it; I've a strong party, I can tell you. Why, I've had upwards of thirty cowtops sitting in my front verandah eating tins of salmon."

"Cowtops?" asked Carthew, "what are they?"

"That's what Hallam would call feudal retainers," explained Hadden, not without vainglory. "They're My Followers. They belong to My Family. I tell you, they come expensive, though; you can't fill up all these retainers on tinned salmon for nothing; but whenever I could get it, I would give 'em squid. Squid's good for natives, but I don't care for it, do you?--or shark either. It's like the working classes at home. With copra at the price it is, they ought to be willing to bear their share of the loss; and so I've told them again and again. I think it's a man's duty to open their minds, and I try to, but you can't get political economy into them; it doesn't seem to reach their intelligence."

There was an expression still sticking in Carthew's memory, and he returned upon it with a smile. "Talking of political economy," said he, "you said if there were two of us to bear the expense, the profits would increase. How do you make out that?"

"I'll show you! I'll figure it out for you!" cried Hadden, and with a pencil on the back of the bill of fare proceeded to perform miracles. He was a man, or let us rather say a lad, of unusual projective power. Give him the faintest hint of any speculation, and the figures flowed from him by the page. A lively imagination and a ready though inaccurate memory supplied his data; he delivered himself with an inimitable heat that made him seem the picture of pugnacity; lavished contradiction; had a form of words, with or without significance, for every form of criticism; and the looker-on alternately smiled at his simplicity and fervour, or was amazed by his unexpected shrewdness. He was a kind of Pinkerton in play. I have called Jim's the romance of business; this was its Arabian tale.

"Have you any idea what this would cost?" he asked, pausing at an item.

"Not I," said Carthew.

"Ten pounds ought to be ample," concluded the projector.

"O, nonsense!" cried Carthew. "Fifty at the very least."

"You told me yourself this moment you knew nothing about it!" cried Tommy. "How can I make a calculation, if you blow hot and cold? You don't seem able to be serious!"

But he consented to raise his estimate to twenty; and a little after, the calculation coming out with a deficit, cut it down again to five pounds ten, with the remark, "I told you it was nonsense. This sort of thing has to be done strictly, or where's the use?"

Some of these processes struck Carthew as unsound; and he was at times altogether thrown out by the capricious startings of the prophet's mind. These plunges seemed to be gone into for exercise and by the way, like the curvets of a willing horse. Gradually the thing took shape; the glittering if baseless edifice arose; and the hare still ran on the mountains, but the soup was already served in silver plate. Carthew in a few days could command a hundred and fifty pounds; Hadden was ready with
five hundred; why should they not recruit a fellow or two more, charter an old ship, and go cruising on their own account? Carthew was an experienced yachtsman; Hadden professed himself able to "work an approximate sight." Money was undoubtedly to be made, or why should so many vessels cruise about the islands? they, who worked their own ship, were sure of a still higher profit.

"And whatever else comes of it, you see," cried Hadden, "we get our keep for nothing. Come, buy some togs, that's the first thing you have to do

of course; and then we'll take a hansom and go to the Currency Lass."

"I'm going to stick to the togs I have," said Norris.

"Are you?" cried Hadden. "Well, I must say I admire you. You're a regular sage. It's what you call Pythagoreanism, isn't it? if I haven't forgotten my philosophy."

"Well, I call it economy," returned Carthew. "If we are going to try this thing on, I shall want every sixpence."

"You'll see if we're going to try it!" cried Tommy, rising radiant from table. "Only, mark you, Carthew, it must be all in your name. I have capital, you see; but you're all right. You can play vacuus viator, if the thing goes wrong."

"I thought we had just proved it was quite safe," said Carthew.

"There's nothing safe in business, my boy," replied the sage; "not even bookmaking."

The public house and tea garden called the Currency Lass represented a moderate fortune gained by its proprietor, Captain Bostock, during a long, active, and occasionally historic career among the islands. Anywhere from Tonga to the Admiralty Isles, he knew the ropes and could lie in the native dialect. He had seen the end of sandal wood, the end

of oil, and the beginning of copra; and he was himself a commercial pioneer, the first that ever carried human teeth into the Gilberts. He was tried for his life in Fiji in Sir Arthur Gordon's time; and if ever he prayed at all, the name of Sir Arthur was certainly not forgotten. He was speared in seven places in New Ireland--the same time his mate was killed--the famous "outrage on the brig Jolly Roger"; but the treacherous savages made little by their wickedness, and Bostock, in spite of their teeth, got seventy-five head of volunteer labour on board, of whom not more than a dozen died of injuries. He had a hand, besides, in the amiable pleasantry which cost the life of Patteson; and when the sham bishop landed, prayed, and gave his benediction to the natives, Bostock, arrayed in a female chemise out of the traderoom, had stood at his right hand and boomed amens. This, when he was sure he was among good fellows, was his favourite yarn. "Two hundred head of labour for a hatful of amens," he used to name the tale; and its sequel, the death of the real bishop, struck him as a circumstance of extraordinary humour.

Many of these details were communicated in the hansom, to the surprise of Carthew.

"Why do we want to visit this old ruffian?" he asked.

"You wait till you hear him," replied Tommy. "That man knows everything."

On descending from the hansom at the Currency Lass, Hadden was struck with the appearance of the cabman, a gross, salt-looking man, red-faced, blue-eyed, short-handed and short-winded, perhaps nearing forty.

"Surely I know you?" said he. "Have you driven me before?"

"Many's the time, Mr. Hadden," returned the driver. "The last time you was back from the islands, it was me that drove you to the races, sir."

"All right: jump down and have a drink then," said Tom, and he turned and led the way into the garden.

Captain Bostock met the party: he was a slow, sour old man, with fishy eyes; greeted Tommy offhand, and (as was afterwards remembered) exchanged winks with the driver.

"A bottle of beer for the cabman there at that table," said Tom. "Whatever you please from shandygaff to champagne at this one here; and you sit down with us. Let me make you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Carthew. I've come on business, Billy; I want to consult you as a friend; I'm going into the island trade upon my own account."

Doubtless the captain was a mine of counsel, but opportunity was denied him. He could not venture on a statement, he was scarce allowed to finish a phrase, before Hadden swept him from the field with a volley

of protest and correction. That projector, his face blazing with inspiration, first laid before him at inordinate length a question, and as soon as he attempted to reply, leaped at his throat, called his facts in question, derided his policy, and at times thundered on him from the heights of moral indignation.

"I beg your pardon," he said once. "I am a gentleman, Mr. Carthew here is a gentleman, and we don't mean to do that class of business. Can't you see who you are talking to? Can't you talk sense? Can't you give us 'a dead bird' for a good traderoom?"

"No, I don't suppose I can," returned old Bostock; "not when I can't hear my own voice for two seconds together. It was gin and guns I did it with."

"Take your gin and guns to Putney!" cried Hadden. "It was the thing in your times, that's right enough; but you're old now, and the game's up. I'll tell you what's wanted now-a-days, Bill Bostock," said he; and did, and took ten minutes to it.

Carthew could not refrain from smiling. He began to think less seriously of the scheme, Hadden appearing too irresponsible a guide; but on the other hand, he enjoyed himself amazingly. It was far from being the same with Captain Bostock.

"You know a sight, don't you?" remarked that gentleman, bitterly, when

Tommy paused.

"I know a sight more than you, if that's what you mean," retorted Tom. "It stands to reason I do. You're not a man of any education; you've been all your life at sea or in the islands; you don't suppose you can give points to a man like me?"

"Here's your health, Tommy," returned Bostock. "You'll make an A-one bake in the New Hebrides."

"That's what I call talking," cried Tom, not perhaps grasping the spirit of this doubtful compliment. "Now you give me your attention. We have the money and the enterprise, and I have the experience: what we want is a cheap, smart boat, a good captain, and an introduction to some house that will give us credit for the trade."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Captain Bostock. "I have seen men like you baked and eaten, and complained of afterwards. Some was tough, and some hadn't no flaviour," he added grimly.

"What do you mean by that?" cried Tom.

"I mean I don't care," cried Bostock. "It ain't any of my interests. I haven't underwrote your life. Only I'm blest if I'm not sorry for the cannibal as tries to eat your head. And what I recommend is a cheap, smart coffin and a good undertaker. See if you can find a house to give

you credit for a coffin! Look at your friend there; HE'S got some sense; he's laughing at you so as he can't stand."

The exact degree of ill-feeling in Mr. Bostock's mind was difficult to gauge; perhaps there was not much, perhaps he regarded his remarks as a form of courtly badinage. But there is little doubt that Hadden resented them. He had even risen from his place, and the conference was on the point of breaking up, when a new voice joined suddenly in the conversation.

The cabman sat with his back turned upon the party, smoking a meerschaum pipe. Not a word of Tommy's eloquence had missed him, and he now faced suddenly about with these amazing words:--

"Excuse me, gentlemen; if you'll buy me the ship I want, I'll get you the trade on credit."

There was a pause.

"Well, what do YOU, mean?" gasped Tommy.

"Better tell 'em who I am, Billy," said the cabman.

"Think it safe, Joe?" inquired Mr. Bostock.

"I'll take my risk of it," returned the cabman.

"Gentlemen," said Bostock, rising solemnly, "let me make you acquainted with Captain Wicks of the Grace Darling."

"Yes, gentlemen, that is what I am," said the cabman. "You know I've been in trouble; and I don't deny but what I struck the blow, and where was I to get evidence of my provocation? So I turned to and took a cab, and I've driven one for three year now and nobody the wiser."

"I beg your pardon," said Carthew, joining almost for the first time; "I'm a new chum. What was the charge?"

"Murder," said Captain Wicks, "and I don't deny but what I struck the blow. And there's no sense in my trying to deny I was afraid to go to trial, or why would I be here? But it's a fact it was flat mutiny. Ask Billy here. He knows how it was."

Carthew breathed long; he had a strange, half-pleasurable sense of wading deeper in the tide of life. "Well," said he, "you were going on to say?"

"I was going on to say this," said the captain sturdily. "I've overheard what Mr. Hadden has been saying, and I think he talks good sense. I like some of his ideas first chop. He's sound on traderooms; he's all there on the traderoom, and I see that he and I would pull together. Then

you're both gentlemen, and I like that," observed Captain Wicks. "And then I'll tell you I'm tired of this cabbing cruise, and I want to get to work again. Now, here's my offer. I've a little money I can stake up,--all of a hundred anyway. Then my old firm will give me trade, and jump at the chance; they never lost by me; they know what I'm worth as supercargo. And, last of all, you want a good captain to sail your ship for you. Well, here I am. I've sailed schooners for ten years. Ask Billy if I can handle a schooner."

"No man better," said Billy.

"And as for my character as a shipmate," concluded Wicks, "go and ask my old firm."

"But look here!" cried Hadden, "how do you mean to manage? You can whisk round in a hansom, and no questions asked. But if you try to come on a quarter-deck, my boy, you'll get nabbed."

"I'll have to keep back till the last," replied Wicks, "and take another name."

"But how about clearing? what other name?" asked Tommy, a little bewildered.

"I don't know yet," returned the captain, with a grin. "I'll see what the name is on my new certificate, and that'll be good enough for me.

If I can't get one to buy, though I never heard of such a thing, there's old Kirkup, he's turned some sort of farmer down Bondi way; he'll hire me his."

"You seemed to speak as if you had a ship in view," said Carthew.

"So I have, too," said Captain Wicks, "and a beauty. Schooner yacht Dream; got lines you never saw the beat of; and a witch to go. She passed me once off Thursday Island, doing two knots to my one and laying a point and a half better; and the Grace Darling was a ship that I was proud of. I took and tore my hair. The Dream's been MY dream ever since. That was in her old days, when she carried a blue ens'n. Grant Sanderson was the party as owned her; he was rich and mad, and got a fever at last somewhere about the Fly River, and took and died. The captain brought the body back to Sydney, and paid off. Well, it turned out Grant Sanderson had left any quantity of wills and any quantity of widows, and no fellow could make out which was the genuine article. All the widows brought lawsuits against all the rest, and every will had a firm of lawyers on the quarterdeck as long as your arm. They tell me it was one of the biggest turns-to that ever was seen, bar Tichborne; the Lord Chamberlain himself was floored, and so was the Lord Chancellor; and all that time the Dream lay rotting up by Glebe Point. Well, it's done now; they've picked out a widow and a will; tossed up for it, as like as not; and the Dream's for sale. She'll go cheap; she's had a long turn-to at rotting."

"What size is she?"

"Well, big enough. We don't want her bigger. A hundred and ninety, going two hundred," replied the captain. "She's fully big for us three; it would be all the better if we had another hand, though it's a pity too, when you can pick up natives for half nothing. Then we must have a cook. I can fix raw sailor-men, but there's no going to sea with a new-chum cook. I can lay hands on the man we want for that: a Highway boy, an old shipmate of mine, of the name of Amalu. Cooks first rate, and it's always better to have a native; he aint fly, you can turn him to as you please, and he don't know enough to stand out for his rights."

From the moment that Captain Wicks joined in the conversation, Carthew recovered interest and confidence; the man (whatever he might have done) was plainly good-natured, and plainly capable; if he thought well of the enterprise, offered to contribute money, brought experience, and could thus solve at a word the problem of the trade, Carthew was content to go ahead. As for Hadden, his cup was full; he and Bostock forgave each other in champagne; toast followed toast; it was proposed and carried amid acclamation to change the name of the schooner (when she should be bought) to the Currency Lass; and the Currency Lass Island Trading Company was practically founded before dusk.

Three days later, Carthew stood before the lawyer, still in his jean suit, received his hundred and fifty pounds, and proceeded rather timidly to ask for more indulgence.

"I have a chance to get on in the world," he said. "By to-morrow evening I expect to be part owner of a ship."

"Dangerous property, Mr. Carthew," said the lawyer.

"Not if the partners work her themselves and stand to go down along with her," was the reply.

"I conceive it possible you might make something of it in that way," returned the other. "But are you a seaman? I thought you had been in the diplomatic service."

"I am an old yachtsman," said Norris. "And I must do the best I can. A fellow can't live in New South Wales upon diplomacy. But the point I wish to prepare you for is this. It will be impossible I should present myself here next quarter-day; we expect to make a six months' cruise of it among the islands."

"Sorry, Mr. Carthew: I can't hear of that," replied the lawyer.

"I mean upon the same conditions as the last," said Carthew.

"The conditions are exactly opposite," said the lawyer. "Last time I had reason to know you were in the colony; and even then I stretched a point. This time, by your own confession, you are contemplating a breach

of the agreement; and I give you warning if you carry it out and I receive proof of it (for I will agree to regard this conversation as confidential) I shall have no choice but to do my duty. Be here on quarter-day, or your allowance ceases."

"This is very hard and, I think, rather silly," returned Carthew.

"It is not of my doing. I have my instructions," said the lawyer.

"And you so read these instructions, that I am to be prohibited from making an honest livelihood?" asked Carthew.

"Let us be frank," said the lawyer. "I find nothing in these instructions about an honest livelihood. I have no reason to suppose my clients care anything about that. I have reason to suppose only one thing,--that they mean you shall stay in this colony, and to guess another, Mr. Carthew. And to guess another."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Norris.

"I mean that I imagine, on very strong grounds, that your family desire to see no more of you," said the lawyer. "O, they may be very wrong; but that is the impression conveyed, that is what I suppose I am paid to bring about, and I have no choice but to try and earn my hire."

"I would scorn to deceive you," said Norris, with a strong flush, "you

have guessed rightly. My family refuse to see me; but I am not going to England, I am going to the islands. How does that affect the islands?"

"Ah, but I don't know that you are going to the islands," said the lawyer, looking down, and spearing the blotting-paper with a pencil.

"I beg your pardon. I have the pleasure of informing you," said Norris.

"I am afraid, Mr. Carthew, that I cannot regard that communication as official," was the slow reply.

"I am not accustomed to have my word doubted!" cried Norris.

"Hush! I allow no one to raise his voice in my office," said the lawyer. "And for that matter--you seem to be a young gentleman of sense--consider what I know of you. You are a discarded son; your family pays money to be shut of you. What have you done? I don't know. But do you not see how foolish I should be, if I exposed my business reputation on the safeguard of the honour of a gentleman of whom I know just so much and no more? This interview is very disagreeable. Why prolong it? Write home, get my instructions changed, and I will change my behaviour. Not otherwise."

"I am very fond of three hundred a year," said Norris, "but I cannot pay the price required. I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"You must please yourself," said the lawyer. "Fail to be here next quarter-day, and the thing stops. But I warn you, and I mean the warning in a friendly spirit. Three months later you will be here begging, and I shall have no choice but to show you in the street."

"I wish you a good-evening," said Norris.

"The same to you, Mr. Carthew," retorted the lawyer, and rang for his clerk.

So it befell that Norris during what remained to him of arduous days in Sydney, saw not again the face of his legal adviser; and he was already at sea, and land was out of sight, when Hadden brought him a Sydney paper, over which he had been dozing in the shadow of the galley, and showed him an advertisement.

"Mr. Norris Carthew is earnestly entreated to call without delay at the office of Mr. ----, where important intelligence awaits him."

"It must manage to wait for me six months," said Norris, lightly enough, but yet conscious of a pang of curiosity.